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corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal immortality"! Immortality does not belong to life: it must be put on. He who puts it on, returns to the image of God. As Aristotle says:

"If God subsists eternally as perfectly as we do sometimes, that is wondrous; and if yet more perfectly, it is yet more wondrous. And even so it is. And life belongs to Him; for the energy of spirit is life, and that energy is He; but His energy is in itself best and eternal life. Hence we call God living, eternal, best; so that life and an æon perpetual, eternal are His; for this is God."

MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

By D. J. SNIDER.

Midsummer Night's Dream is perhaps the most popular of Shakspeare's comedies. Its weird ethereal scenery captivates the purely poetical nature, its striking sensuous effects impress the most ordinary mind, while its faint rainbow-like outlines of the profoundest truths entice the thinker with an irresistible charm to explore the hidden meaning of the poet. There is no work of our author that is so universal, that appeals so strongly to high and low, to old and young, to man and woman. Its shadowy forms appear, disappear, and reappear in the wildest sport, and the critic may sometimes doubt his ability to track them through all their mazy hues. Nor can it be denied that there is a capricious play of fancy over and around the underlying elements of the drama. Still, like all of Shakspeare's pieces, it is based on thought, and must look to the same for its justification. Our attempt, therefore, will be to seize and fix these fleeting iridescent shapes in the abstract forms of thought. To be sure, the poetry of the play is thus destroyed; but criticism is not poetry, but prose. For if criticism were poetry, it had better keep silent in the presence of this piece, and not vainly attempt to imitate that which is inimitable, or say over again that which the Poet has already so adequately said. The only justification of the critic, therefore, is that he expresses the content of this drama in a new form—the form of thought

—for his reader, instead of the imaginative form which the dramatist has chosen, and in fact must choose.

I am aware that not a few people will regard any attempt to make out a consistent unity in this play as wanton and absurd refinement. Moreover, the great interpreters of Shakspeare will be pointed to, who call it a caprice, a dream without necessary connection in thought of its various parts. That is, the work is a chaos. But every person who reads this play with admiration must grant that there is a profound harmony pervading it throughout, that he feels all its essential parts to be in perfect unison with one another, that the effect of the whole is not that of a discordant and ill-assorted poem. Thus, however, the notion of caprice or of a dream must be abandoned as the fundamental idea of the work. Both these elements undoubtedly are present; there is a capricious ingredient in certain parts, and also the fairy-world is likened to the dream-world; but they are only subordinate members in the organization of the whole. If, then, it must be granted that there is a deep, underlying harmony throughout the entire piece, it must further be granted that the attempt to ascertain and state the law of such harmony is not only reasonable but necessary.

The procedure of this essay will be twofold. First, it will attempt to state the phases or stages of the entire action and their transition into one another; secondly, it will seek to trace the various threads which run through the whole play. The former divides the total movement of the drama into a certain number of parts, the latter unites the characters together into groups. This will give a complete analysis of the work, which must be the foundation for all future conclusions.

But after such preparatory labor of method, the chief part of the critic's work remains to be done. All the above-mentioned stages must be explained for thought; the transitions must be shown to be logically necessary; the different characters, if important, but particularly the different groups of characters, must be elucidated in their unity, in their fundamental idea. In other words, the language of imagination, which is that of the poet, must be translated into the language of thought, which is that of the critic.

Following the principles above laid down, we are now ready for the statement of the various phases or divisions of the total movement of the play. These are three: *1st*, the Real World, which is embraced in the first Act, and which is called real because its mediations and its collisions are those of common experience, and are based upon the self-conscious Reason of man; *2nd*, the Fairy World, the Ideal Realm which terminates in the course of the fourth Act—so named because its mediations and collisions are brought about through the agency of supernatural beings, the creatures of the Imagination; *3rd*, the Representation in Art, which, together with the return from Fairyland to the world of reality, takes up the rest of the drama, except the final scene. In this last part, then, the first two parts mirror themselves, the action reflects itself, the play plays itself playing, it is its own spectator, including its audience and itself in one and the same movement. Thus there is reached a totality of Representation which not only represents something, but represents itself in the act of Representation. The very limits of Dramatic Art are touched here; it can go no further. In this reflection of the play by itself is to be found the thought which binds together its multifarious and seemingly irreconcilable elements.

The reader will notice that there is very little portraiture of character in the play. The sketches of persons are true, but light and superficial; there is no profound and intricate psychological painting, such as is to be found in other of Shakspeare's works. This is, therefore, in no sense a character-drama, and the criticism which proceeds from such a point of view would assuredly fall short of the true conception of the Whole. No doubt there is some characterization; there must be in a drama, but it is not the principal element. The chief interest is centered in the groups, in the transitions, in the different phases which are above called worlds, as the Real World, the Fairy World, and their Representation. We shall, therefore, indulge very sparingly in character-analysis, believing it to be quite out of place here. Our object will be to unfold and connect these various parts and threads logically, and unite them into one central thought. For the work of the poet moves in images, in individual

forms which are apparently independent; but thought must unify all these distinct elements, and thus must free itself from the pictures of the imagination by exhibiting the underlying ground of their order and connection.

We shall, therefore, begin with the Real World, and carefully separate the various threads of which it is composed. The first of these threads is the part of Theseus and Hippolyta, whose love hovers over the whole drama, the beautiful arch which spans the entire action. In them there is no disreption, no collision; the unity is perfect from the start, and remains undisturbed to the end. They are thus the type of that harmony in which all the difficulties of the lovers must terminate, and in which all the complications of the play must be solved. But the essential function of Theseus is that he is the head of the State. He, therefore, represents the highest rational institutions of man—he is both judge and ruler—through him the Real World is seen to be controlled by an organized system of law and justice—such is the atmosphere which surrounds him everywhere. Hence he stands above the rest and commands them, but does not himself become involved in their collisions. At first he sides with Egeus and asserts absolute submission to parental authority, but in the end he alters his mind and commands the daughter to be united to her chosen lover. The grounds for this change of judgment are carefully elaborated by the poet, and indeed the movement from strife to harmony lies just between the two decisions of Theseus.

Next comes the second thread, Egeus and the group of lovers. Here now the negative element, discord, is introduced, and the contrast to the preceding pair is manifest. Egeus comes before the Duke Theseus with his refractory daughter, who insists upon marrying the one whom she loves, without regarding the selection of her father. Thus it is the old collision, involving the right of choice on the part of the child against the will of the parent. It is a theme which Shakespeare has often handled, and for which he seems to have a particular delight. But this is not the only difficulty which arises. There begins also a complicated love-collision, by which is meant the struggle which takes place when individuals of either sex find out that their love is unrequited

by its object. Here two such cases are portrayed: Helena loves and is repelled by Demetrius, Demetrius loves and is repelled by Hermia; the reciprocal love being between Lysander and Hermia, which, however, has to endure the conflict with the will of the parent. Yet even this sole harmony will hereafter be destroyed for a time in Fairyland. Such are the collisions from which the action starts, and which must be solved by the play.

The law at Athens demands the most implicit submission to parental authority, under the severest penalties, and the Duke will abate none of its rigors. The harshness of Egeus, the father, and the decision of Theseus, the ruler, force the lovers to flee from their home and their city, from Family and State. But whither are they to go? It is just at this point that we must seek for the basis of their transition to a new order of things. We hope the reader will observe carefully the nature and necessity of this transition, for here lies the distinctive work of the critic. It must be borne in mind that the lovers do not run away from the world of organized wrong; on the contrary, it is the authority of the parent and of the law—certainly a valid authority—from which they are fleeing. Hence they abandon the world of institutions, in which alone man can enjoy a free and rational existence, and they go to the opposite, for it is just these institutions and the law which have become insupportable to them. They cannot enter another State, for it is the State as such with which they have fallen out, and hence the same collision must arise. Thus the nature of their place of refuge must be determined by what they reject. The next place we find them is in a new and strange world, called by the poet a “wood near Athens.”

The similarity at this point to “As You Like it” is apparent. In that play there was also a flight from society and an entrance into a wood, the Forest of Arden. But mark the distinction; it was a flight from the world of wrong—society was without justice; while in the drama before us, it is the flight from the supremacy of law and just authority—in general, from the World of Right. Hence, in “As You Like it” those who flee must begin to build up society from its

foundation; they must commence with the primitive pastoral existence which developes into society. Such was the course of that drama. But here there can be no such movement, for society in its just and rightful form is already present, and the flight is from it.

On their entrance into the wood, the lovers must therefore leave behind them the realized world of Reason, the State, the Family, and the other institutions of society. Now, the object of all these institutions is to secure freedom to man, and to shield him from external accident. By them he is protected against incursions of enemies from abroad, against injustice at home, against every species of rude violence; through civil institutions brute force is shut out as it were by mountain-bulwarks. Man is only in this way secure of his freedom and can enjoy his existence as a self-determined being. For in the State all action is determined ultimately through Reason in the form of laws and institutions—in other words, is determined through man himself; thus it is his true abode, in which he sees everywhere the work of his own Intelligence, whose mediations are therefore perfectly clear to his mind, and not the work of some dark extraneous power. It is Theseus who represents such a world in the drama before us.

The lovers, therefore, enter a place where all these mediations of Intelligence no longer exist, but they are brought into direct contact with the mediations of Nature which determine them from without. Such a place is hence represented by the Poet as a wood dark and wild, a pure product of Nature, inhabited by a race of beings foreign to man and unknown in the world of Reason. The lovers are, therefore, at once exposed to all sorts of external influences. They have now no State above them whose action is their own highest rational principle, hence clear to their minds; but the world which is now at work is beyond them, outside of their Intelligence, the world of Nature, of Accident, of Externality. Now it was seen to be the great function of the State to subordinate these elements hostile to freedom, and to protect man against them; but when the former is wiped out, or has been abandoned, the latter must have full sway. Therefore the

one fundamental property of the "wood near Athens" must be that it exhibits a world of unfreedom, of external determination.

But how is such a world to be represented by the Poet Here, too, there need be no doubt, for an adequate statement of this phase of consciousness has frequently been given in the course of human history. In certain stages of culture man's profoundest convictions repose upon a system of external determination; it is his deepest belief that he is the sport and the victim of extraneous powers, and consequently he must elaborate a corresponding expression of his faith. While he has not yet freed himself from the trammels of Nature by means of institutions and thought, what else can he do but portray himself as he really is? Such is the character of all Mythologies. The mediations of Nature and of man in relation to the same are conceived to take place by the instrumentality of supernatural agents; the most common phenomena have behind them the demon, angel, fairy, god, as producing cause. Man is not seized in his freedom, nor is Nature subjected to Law, but all mediations are performed by a power superior to both. Mythology is, therefore, the adequate expression of this world of external determination.

The mythopœic epoch of nations hence will furnish the poet numerous examples for his purpose. Which of the many mythologies will he then take? Evidently the one which has been elaborated by the nation which he is addressing. It is known as an historical fact that the belief in fairies was common, at the time of the writing of the play, throughout England. To this consciousness already existent the Poet appeals, and at the same time portrays it to itself.

But there are two more characteristics which follow from this one fundamental principle. In the first place, the Fairy-world is not the product of Reason, which is here the State and has been left behind, but of the Imagination, which objectifies the processes of Nature and Spirit in the form of images and external activities. It projects some personality behind every kind of mediation. Hence when it takes complete possession of the mind, all occurrences are transferred to the realm of the Supernatural. But the content of the

Imagination is, nevertheless, the genuine expression of the consciousness of a nation, its statement and solution of the profoundest problems of existence. But, in the second place, this is also the world of poetry, since everything is transfused into images and external influences; the prose of real life, with its means and ends, its wants and utilities, is banished, man seems to live in a perpetual dream. The abstract Understanding, with its categories of cause and effect, laws of Nature, etc., has no validity here; all is pictured, abstract terms are quite unknown. Whole nations like the ancient Hindoos seem to have lived in this dreamy sensuous state. The Fairy-world is a phase of this consciousness, and hence the ethereal poetical existences which flit through it are not merely the capricious products of the poet's fancy, but strictly necessary.

These are the essential qualities with which the Poet has endowed his "wood near Athens." It is a world of external determination; it has a Mythology which is the product of Imagination, and thus resembles dream-land, where all rushes in without cause; it is poetic as contradistinguished from the prosaic life in society.

Such is the second thread of the drama, the love-collision and that which springs from it, namely, the poetic Fairy-land. The third thread is the learning and representation of the theatrical piece by the clowns. This is motived on the first page of the play, in an external manner, by Theseus calling upon his Master of Revels to stir up the Athenian youth to merriments, to produce something for the entertainment of the court. That is, a demand for Art has arisen. For man's highest want is, after all, to know himself; he desires to behold his own countenance as it were in a mirror which Art holds up before him. Moreover, there is an official attached to the court, and generally to all courts, whose duty it is to provide for the above-mentioned want.

The theme will therefore be that which gives a picture of the Court, of its chief thought and business at this time, which is love. The content of the drama of "Pyramus and Thisbe" is thus a love-collision. Now, to exhibit such a work adequately demands the highest skill both in actor and poet. They must be gifted by nature with true artistic conception,

they must polish nature by culture, Art must be their life and living, they must be professional. Such at least is the general rule, dilettantism beyond the private circle is intolerable, and never was it more happily ridiculed than just in these clowns. Shakspeare has therefore chosen not to give a poetic, ideal picture in this part, but a prosaic one. And necessarily so, for what would the second picture otherwise have been but a repetition of the first? In fact, this play of the clowns is the contrast to his own true play; he has exhibited thus in one and the same totality the negative side of his own work.

The idea of the third thread now before us may therefore be given in the statement: Prose is trying to be Poetry. The result is a burlesque of the legitimate kind, for it is not Poetry or any other high and holy thing which is wantonly caricatured, but the prosaic conception of Poetry. The contradiction is real, inherent; the Prosaic attempts to be what it is not and can never be, the Poetic; its efforts to put on such etherial robes,—are simply ludicrous. But we have also the True alongside of the Burlesque; genuine Poetry is to be found just here in the same piece; thus the Poet does not leave us with a negative result; after his wit has ceased to sparkle, there is not left merely a handful of ashes, but the positive side is present also.

In this connection, another distinction must be noticed which our Poet has carefully elaborated. It is not the cultivated, refined, prosaic Understanding which is here represented; that will be shown hereafter, and has quite a different manifestation. But it is the dull, uneducated, prosaic consciousness of low life, of mechanical employments, with a feeling only for the most gross sensuous effects, without even cultivated taste, not to speak of artistic sense. The lowest form of prosaic life thus proposes to undertake to represent the very highest form of the highest Art, namely, Dramatic Poetry; hence the clowns, too, must go to the poetic Fairyland, the mystic wood of the Imagination.

These are the three threads which the Poet has unfolded in the first Act. They embrace the Real World, from which the play suddenly leaps into the ideal realm. The logic of this transition has already been given; the lovers flee from

civil society with its manifold mediations, whose object is to secure freedom and enter a Wood whose characteristic was defined to be external determination. That is, man acts through influences from without, and not through the mediations of his own Intelligence, through institutions. The reader will note, therefore, that Theseus and his world here disappear and their place is taken by the fairies: the former cannot consist with the latter. Moreover, when Theseus reappears, the sway of these supernatural beings at once vanishes. If we now examine the nature and attributes of the fairies as here represented, it will be easy to discern their common characteristic. They work upon man, deceive him, lead him about by appearances, victimize his senses, in general manifest external determination. But it must not be forgotten that they only exhibit man himself; they are simply a portraiture of his own unfree stage of consciousness, of his own delusions. Such must be their interpretations, they are symbols of some phase of Spirit.

Let us now consider the organization of this Fairy-world, for it is a regular hierarchy. First comes the common fairy, with a description of her functions: she is the servant; she dewes the orbs upon the green, spots the cowslips, hangs dew-drops in the flower's ear; that is, she performs the operations usually ascribed to Nature, which is thus mediated in its activity by the fairies. Next are told the doings of Puck, a servant of a higher order, having also a sphere of independent activity, in which he is the embodiment of mischief, and causes what are usually called accidents. He seems to stand in a nearer relation to man than the other fairies, and has a certain external power over him. Also the repulsive element of Nature is not forgotten; it stands in open hostility to these beings of beauty: snakes, newts, worms, spiders—negative Nature, as it may be called for the occasion, is warned off once for all from the sleeping fairy queen; only Philomel with her melody may approach. The Beautiful cannot abide the Ugly. But the central principle of the fairy organization, and its chief figures, are the pair Oberon and Titania, to whom all the rest are subordinate.

The main fact here to be observed is that the highest fairies are king and queen; hence, are not only sexed but

coupled, or, if the term is applicable to these beings, are married. Such is not the case with the other fairies. This hint will furnish the key to what follows, for the sexual diremption is the deepest contradiction of Nature, and the sexual unity is the profoundest harmony of Nature. The pair, therefore, are monarchs, and are placed on the apex of the physical world, whose highest effort is self-reproduction. At present, however, their unity has been disturbed—the two sexes are in opposition—Titania and Oberon have quarreled—what is the result? All Nature is out of joint, in strife with itself; the seasons do not come in their regular order—winter is in summer and summer in winter; the waters have taken possession of the land and destroyed the labors of man: all of which evils are produced by the quarrel of the royal pair. The cause is explicitly stated by the Poet in the speech of Titania:

“And this same progeny of evil comes
From our debate, from our dissension;
We are their parents and original.”

For when the central and controlling principle of Nature is thus deranged and in contradiction with itself, the effects must be transmitted to all the subordinate parts. Such is the poetical conception of the hierarchy governing Nature.

But the cause of the unhappy separation of the fairy couple has not been forgotten; it is represented to be jealousy. This passion is based upon the absolute unity of man and wife; it asserts that each individual shall find his or her complete existence in the other. If a third person is taken by either, the tie is destroyed. Jealousy, therefore, rests upon the monogamic nature of marriage, and will and ought to be manifested in all its intensity when that relation is disturbed. The king and queen of Fairyland reproach one another with their gallantries, quarrel, and separate. Confusion and strife must now reign in the kingdom of Nature. Leaving out of account the mutual charges of infidelity as equally false or equally true, the fault of the separation would seem to lie with Titania. However this may be, Oberon resolves to assert the husband's right to be head of the family, and is determined to subordinate his refractory wife. His aim is unity and peace, not only in his own domestic relations,

but in the entire realm of which he is the supreme ruler. Thus the action sets in towards the reconciliation of the conflict in Fairyland. Accordingly, he prepares the means for his purpose. It is by dropping the juice of a certain flower upon her eye-lids when she is asleep, in order to make her fall in love with some ugly monster, the opposite of her nature. The retributive character of this punishment is obvious: if you cannot live in peace with me, one of your own kind, then try the contrary, a horrid brute. Titania, therefore, becomes infatuated with Bottom the ass. It is the Poetic under the yoke of Prose, the natural result of her separation from her husband, since she has abandoned for the time the beautiful world of the fairies and its monarch. In this service she undergoes the deepest indignity—in vain she lavishes her choicest love—her ideal perfections are soiled and unappreciated by the gross clown. The cause of the quarrel being at last removed by the submission of the wife, Oberon takes pity on her like a dutiful husband, releases her from her thralldom, and restores her to his bosom.

Thus the conflict which harassed Fairyland has been harmonized, and peace reigns. But mark! now occurs one of those transitions upon which so much stress was laid in the first part of this essay. Night flies away, the darkness of the Wood is driven off by the light of the day, the Fairy World disappears with its own reconciliation, the Real World dawns. But this is not all. Theseus the monarch is on hand, ready to judge—Egeus is here with his former collision—all transpires in the clear sunlight of consciousness—external mediation has ceased. Is it not evident that we have returned to the world of institutions which we left some time ago?

Having thus brought the first thread to its termination, we are now ready to take up the second thread, the lovers. They arrive from Athens, and enter the Wood in the height of the strife between Oberon and Titania. They also bring along collisions among themselves, for two of them have an unreciprocated love. Fairyland, therefore, is a picture of the condition of the lovers, for both have collisions, and indeed similar collisions, namely, those in the Family. Hermia has left her father, Titania has left her husband, and also the

conflicts of the rejected suitors may be reckoned under this head. Here is the point where the relation between the real and ideal worlds may be seen: the one reflects the other. The internal state of the lovers is thus pictured in the world of the Imagination, which was before said to be this Fairy-land, the poetic abode of such forms.

It was also shown that the flight from society must be a flight to a world of external determination; here it now is in full operation. The lovers are wholly influenced by powers outside of themselves; the chief means, for example, is a flower wounded by Cupid's bolt. But these external forms, like the Fairy-world itself, are poetic, are symbolical of the inner spirit of man, and hence must be interpreted. The common and most natural view is that this flower represents the effects of what the Poet calls "Fancy," a combination of caprice and love, which chooses and changes with wanton whim the objects of affection. The part of the lovers in the "Wood near Athens" may thus be interpreted to be a play of fanciful, capricious love.

On account of the externality of the means, a mistake is possible; the mediation is not in the heart and emotions. Puck anoints the wrong person. The effect is quite the same as that of a comedy of Intrigue in which there is some form of disguise. This mistake, therefore, produces all the results of that very common dramatic instrumentality, Mistaken Identity. In fact, Shakspeare has in several places indicated that the influence of Mistaken Identity is like that of a dream, since it places man in such new and strange relations that he seems to himself to have been carried into an unknown world. The mistake destroys the only remaining reciprocal tie, the collisions are now completed, each individual hates his lover and loves his hater. There ensues a love-chase through the woods which furnishes sport for all Fairyland, till the parties, weary with fatigue, lay down on the ground and go to sleep. The solution of the collision is also external, and is brought about by command of Oberon, the central power, whose highest object has been all along the unity of the Family in his own case, and hence, to be true to his character, he must manifest the same trait to the lovers who have wandered into his realm. The separa-

tion cannot, therefore, continue, for, as before stated, the highest point and goal of Nature is the unity of the two sexes in which the two are made into a mysterious one. Such has been the aim of Oberon, or, if you please, the aim of Nature, from the beginning. To take another phase of the same interpretation, the lovers have run the course of caprice, and are now ready to experience the permanent affection upon which the Family reposes.

The lovers awake, and, their difficulty being harmonized, Fairyland disappears like a dream. Not that they have actually dreamed; on the contrary, the contrast is very distinctly drawn — they sleep, but do not dream, in this realm. In their waking state, they compare their night's experience to a dream on account of the external mediation. The fact is to be noticed, for critics have generally tried to explain the whole piece from this single element. The lovers now find themselves again in the world of institutions, before Theseus the ruler and Egeus the parent. But now the two pairs are in perfect harmony, their love is reciprocal; hence the rational basis of union is present in both couples. Theseus, therefore, reverses his former sentence; he decides in favor of the Right of Choice on the part of the daughter against the will of the parent—a solution which Shakspeare uniformly gives in all similar collisions. Nor can Theseus consistently do otherwise; for what is he himself doing but celebrating his own union with Hippolyta? The return of the lovers from the ideal to the real world is thus accomplished.

The third thread must now be resumed, the Clowns in Fairyland. Why are they, too, here? The question comes up, for this would seem to be a place most uncongenial to them. And so it is; the poetic world is certainly not their natural abode. But in the present instance they have left their prosaic occupation, they are transcending their own sphere, and are trying to represent a play, a work of Art, which lies far out of their comprehension. The attempt, however, brings them into the Fairyland of Poetry, which is soon found full of strange beings, and they are compelled by terror to leave it with precipitation. A man cannot make, nor indeed act, a drama without entering the mystic Wood, the world of the

Imagination. To be sure, the clowns themselves have only a common-place reason, "lest our devices be known"; since, if the plot should be revealed, then there would be no "surprise." But the principal thing to be noticed is how they reduce everything to the dead level of Prose. Their solicitude for the audience is touching; it must be perpetually reminded that these characters are not real, but that they are merely assumed: that I am not Pyramus, but Bottom the weaver; that I am not a lion—be not afraid!—but Snug the joiner. The clowns, therefore, have not the primary notion of the drama; they do not comprehend that it is a representation and not a reality. The imaginative form must be at once destroyed, and the illusion of Art is always extinguished by their prosaic explanations. This trait is common to all these "mechanicals," and lies deep in their nature; it forms the essence of their comic characterization. They reduce all poetic form to Prose. Thus their end is a nullity; they are simply destroying the object which they are seeking to produce, are annihilating their own end, which principle is the essence of comedy.

Another trait must not be forgotten. How realistic they are! how true to nature and probability! No sham moonshine for them; they must have the queen of night herself present in her own person, if possible; no pretended wall, or, if it must be represented by a man, let him be plastered. All is to be real, natural, probable. Thus, however, the thought is lost, for the attempt is not to portray Spirit, but to reproduce the meaningless forms of Nature in their fidelity. One might almost think that the poet was satirizing the modern generation of critics, so true does he hit their canons. But Nature has only to illustrate and portray mind in an artistic work; when it ceases to have this significance, it is worthless.

Their flight from the land of the Imagination cannot be long delayed. Bottom, the hero of the clowns, appears to them suddenly with an ass's head on, the appropriateness of which might be shown in various ways, but it will be manifest. Such does Bottom turn out to be in the realm of Art, and is thus represented even to his own comrades. Terror-stricken at his image, which is without question their own

too, they flee, lest they be "translated" also. Such is the lamentable outcome of the rude Prosaic, in its effort to reproduce the Poetic. How much of this satire was intended for his own age by the Poet cannot now be told. But since it was his special calling, the drama, which is here the theme, we may suppose that it had some foothold in the circumstances of his time.

One other phase of this realm remains to be mentioned. We have just seen with what effect the prosaic clowns woo Poetry; what, now, if Poetry should become the lover and servant of Prose? Such is the scene when Titania falls in love with Bottom—the queen of Fairyland with an ass. The contrast in all its ludicrousness is here portrayed, the two elements are brought out face to face. The motive for her strange conduct has already been stated to lie in her separation from Oberon. The Ethereal is thus subjected to the Gross and Sensual; Imagination and her handmaids, separated from beings of their own spiritual nature, must obey the behests of Prose, nay, be swallowed in its voracious appetite. Her rapt poetic utterances are reduced to grovelling common-places, her ambrosial food seems to excite no desire, her sweet caresses are turned into grossness, she has at last to tie up his tongue. When she returns to her first love, how she hates the brute. The result, therefore, of the clowns' visit to Fairyland, the realm of Art, is that they have produced and also beheld a picture, but a picture of their own assinenity, and that they have been rudely driven off from the mystic Wood by its inhabitants. Thus they also have returned to the Real World.

We have now traced to their conclusion the three threads of the second grand division of the drama, the Fairy World. Again we are ushered into the presence of the old society from which we parted at the end of the First Act. The difficulty upon which a separation from it was based has disappeared, the collision which created the ideal realm has been harmonized; hence the ground of its existence has been taken away. Theseus, who represents the State, no longer gives absolute validity to the will of the parent; and since it was his adverse decree which caused the flight, there must now follow the return and the reconciliation with the Real

World. Here the work of the Poet might generally end—here it does end in the similar drama of “As You Like it.” But in the play before us he has chosen to make a higher synthesis; he wishes not only to portray an action to the spectators, but also to make the action portray itself.

Hence we must now pass to the third division of the piece, which has not yet been developed, the Representation. The Court has demanded Art in which to see itself, or at least by which to amuse itself. The two actions which have hitherto run alongside of each other are now to be brought up before Theseus and his company, who henceforth assume the part of audience and critics. The poem therefore, after beholding and reflecting itself, is to criticise itself. But these criticisms will only illustrate the points of view of the different speakers. The first thread of this division is the story of the lovers which has been told to the company, as we see by the words of Hippolyta at the beginning of the Fifth Act:

“’Tis strange, my Theseus, that these lovers speak of.”

Shakspeare, however, could not well repeat the same story in the same play, and hence it is here omitted. The main point dwelt upon by the Poet is the criticism of Theseus. How will he treat the Poetic as it was shown in the strange tale of Fairyland? His conception is purely prosaic; hence in him Prose again appears, but it is now altogether different from the grovelling sensuous form which was manifested in the “rude mechanicals.” Here we see education, refinement, abstract culture. Theseus, therefore, represents in this connection the Prose of the cultivated Understanding, whose skepticism assails all poetic conception and tears its forms to pieces. He derides the “antic fables”; he scoffs at “the lunatic, the lover, and the poet,” placing them in the same category; the Imagination itself is made the subject of his sneers—it is full of “tricks,” and is placed in striking contrast with “cool reason.” The poet’s function is to “give to airy nothing a local habitation and a name”; that is, the poet’s work is without any actual or rational content. Old Theseus was a downright *Philister*, as the Germans say. It is the prosaic Understanding attempting to criticise Poetry, whose essence is totally outside of its horizon. Theseus

will not acknowledge that under this fabulous form may be found the profoundest meaning; it is not his form, and hence worthless.

The reader will perhaps be surprised at this interpretation of the famous speech of Theseus, since the passages above mentioned, which are taken from it, have been quoted by critics of high authority as the most adequate definitions of Poetry and of the Imagination that have ever been given. The fact is, however, Theseus intends to ridicule both, and his language, on a careful examination, will be found to be that of skeptical derision. Look, too, at the answer of his wife and see how she understands him.

This wife, Hippolyta, is of quite a different character; she, with all the appreciation inherent in the female nature, is inclined to gently dissent from the negative judgments of her husband. She mildly suggests that there may be some content in these wild poetic forms of Fairyland; that the story of the night

"More witnesseth than fancy's images,
And grows to something of great constancy;
But, howsoever, strange and admirable."

With this quiet remark she ceases; she does not pursue the discussion further, for she is a woman, and possesses perhaps the immediate feeling and appreciation of Poetry rather than the ability to give the grounds of her judgment. Such is the contrast; Theseus has at his side the opposite form of consciousness; the husband and wife exhibit opposite phases of critical opinion. It may be added that the Poet does not represent and cannot represent the highest critical comprehension of his work, for that involves the statement of the entire content in an abstract form, while he must necessarily employ for the same content a poetical form.

But the second thread, the play of the clowns, now comes up for representation. It must also be subjected to the criticism of the audience, mainly composed of these two mental principles, Theseus and Hippolyta. The Duke wants to be amused—he rejects the old plays—he must see something new—he therefore chooses "Pyramus and Thisbe" both on account of its novelty and its absurd title, though against

the strong protests of his Art-critic. The clowns appear and go through with their play. We again observe in them the same elements which were before characterized: the destruction of all artistic form; the introduction of nature in its immediateness simply for its own sake and not as the bearer of any spiritual meaning; rant, which lays equal emphasis on what is important and unimportant, without any relief; ignorance of all technical requirements of acting, with a strong infusion of general stupidity and self-importance. Indeed, it may be said that the separation of the lovers in "Pyramus and Thisbe" rests not upon a moral obstacle, but a natural object; the basis of its collision is a wall. It exhibits the realistic style reduced to absurdity. The critical judgment of the audience serves to bring out more strongly the contradictions of the piece, beneath whose sneers it perishes, Theseus pronouncing upon it final sentence. It will be observed that the clowns have fared hard in their artistic efforts. After a very uncomplimentary picture of Bottom, and, in fact, of themselves, they are frightened out of Fairyland, and thus excluded from the world of Poetry; and now their work is torn piece-meal by the critical Understanding. Neither Gods nor Men, Poetry nor Prose, can endure mediocrity in Art, much less stupidity. It will also not escape the attention of the reader that the Poet has portrayed in the drama before us the two essential phases of the prosaic Understanding in its attempts to attain the beautiful realm of Poetry. Theseus and the clowns have thus a common element.

The three pairs of lovers retire to rest in perfect happiness and peace, and the Poet again allows the Fairy World to flit for a moment across the stage, as if to give one more hint of its meaning. This world is now, too, in harmony; Oberon and Titania, the ideal couple, beside the three real ones, enter with their train and sing an epithalamium whose content is the prosperity and concord of the Family. Thus Fairyland has done its last duty: it has reflected the peaceful solution of the struggle, whereas previously it had imaged the strife.

At this point the drama must end; its three divisions with their various threads have been wrought out to their natural

conclusion. My reader will probably consider some of the above explanations to be far-fetched, and it must be confessed that the faintest hint of the Poet has often been expanded in full. Such, however, is the duty of criticism; it gives what Poetry cannot, and Poetry gives what it cannot. Besides, in the present drama I feel satisfied that Shakspeare did not always adequately realize his conception; he wrestles with his idea, and sometimes does not succeed in embodying it with clearness and completeness. Especially the third part, the Representation, caused him great difficulty, and is the least perfect of the three parts. The thought of making the play reflect itself in the course of its own action never lost hold of him during the whole period of his dramatic career. The poem has other inequalities of execution, and bears numerous traces of the youthfulness of the author. But the conception is one of his grandest, though not always clear and definite in his own mind, and hence the work is marred with some imperfections. It has been attempted in the foregoing essay to develop the complete idea of the Poet, not in his own beautiful poetic form, but in the abstract form of Thought.

Let us express the movement of this drama with other categories. In it is introduced the Mythological World, the adequate poetic representation of which, however, gives the Epos. The latter has as its mediating instrumentalities those beings of a realm beyond, the god and goddess, the nymph, fairy, elf, angel; or, to present its negative elements, devils, furies, goblins, griffins, etc. These supernatural powers are portrayed as influencing man externally. They, therefore, do not belong to the drama in its strictness, for it exhibits man as determined through himself, through his own internal being, through motives, ends, passions, thoughts. It is the most adequate expression of self-determination, of freedom, and hence it is the highest point of Art. The divinities of the Epos may, it is true, be only these internal determinations of man in an external form; but it is just this form which gives the basis of the essential distinctions of Art. The Epos, therefore, passes away in the culture of nations, when they come to a profounder self-consciousness, and the Drama takes its place as a truer and more adequate repre-

sentation of Spirit. In order to ascertain, therefore, the true position of the mythological element in the play before us, we must be careful to note that it also is transitory; it passes away, with the dawn of light, the most perfect symbol of consciousness: when the parties fully wake in the presence of Theseus, it is no more. In like manner it departs in the history of nations. The Poet has thus introduced an epical element into his drama, but only as a subordinate phase; the action moves out of this purely epical world, where, if it remained to the end, it would not give a true drama. A dramatic composition which employs only these instrumentalities of the Epos is a contradiction; it violates its own fundamental principle. Many dramatists have committed this sin against their Art, and thus debauched it; but Shakspeare always remains true to its highest thought; if he seems at times to wander, it is only to return with additional spoils. The External, though employed by him in all its shapes, he invariably transmutes into the Internal.

The views which have been held concerning the purport of this drama have been various, and have as a general rule seized some one side and considered it to be the whole. It has been thought to be an intrigue of capricious love, and certainly this is one of its elements, namely, the part of the lovers. It has also been called a romantic drama, as if the mythological world were its essential thread, whereas it is only one of the several threads which are woven together into a whole. But the most general explanation seems to be that it is a dream. To this view, however, the objections are so strong that it cannot be reasonably entertained. Granting that the world of fairies is the same as the world of dreams, the above-mentioned explanation leaves two entire movements of the play wholly unaccounted for, namely, the first and the third. More than half of the poem is therefore decidedly awake, and transpires in the Real World. In the next place, it is not pretended that the lovers dream these occurrences in Fairyland; on the contrary, they first go to sleep after all the events there have transpired. They only compare their experiences to a dream. Then, when we have called it a dream, what is explained, since the content of dreams is so various, and their product is not geuerally a

poem like "Midsummer Night's Dream"? Finally, the name of the piece is cited in support of this view; but it may be laid down as a general rule that the titles of Shakspeare's comedies have only the most remote reference to their contents; several have, in fact, names of quite the same signification. It is true that the world of Imagination bears a great resemblance to that of dreams, and it is just this resemblance and nothing else of which the poet speaks. Hence the necessity of seeking a higher synthesis which will account for every part of the drama, and will combine its diverse elements into a consistent unity.

BOOK NOTICES.

Liberty and Law under Federative Government. By Britton A. Hill. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co. 1874. St. Louis: Gray, Baker & Co.

Contents.—A Discussion of the legal and political Organizations of the Jews, Greeks, Romans, Feudal States, Switzerland, Great Britain, and the United States; A Chapter on the Functions of the State, its affirmative powers regulating for each citizen his culture and behavior; its negative powers prohibiting from injuring others: including regulations adapted to secure (1) Public Hygiene, (2) Public Education, (3) Public Intercommunication; established by three codes, (1) a constitutional, (2) statutory, (3) federative and international. The design of government to secure for man (1) a physical body in the world of nature, (2) an intelligent being in the world of intelligence, (3) a social being in the state and world at large.

Public Hygiene is discussed under the following heads: I. Pure Air; II. Laying-out of Cities; III. Construction of Buildings; IV. Personal Cleanliness; V. Laying-out of Counties and Townships; VI. Pure Food and Drink.

Public Education: I. Relation of Morality and Law; II. The Right to Rest; III. The Right to Schools; IV. The Nature of Education; V. Classification of Schools; VI. School Exhibitions; VII. The Education of every Scholar for a Vocation; VIII. Analysis of this System of Schools.

Public Intercommunication includes a consideration of the subjects: I. Money, (1) its origin, (2) invention of banking, (3) creation of State debts. (4) interest a curse, (5) true nature of money, (6) history of paper money, (7) foreign exchanges and international clearing-house; II. Public Highways—(1) their nature, (2) mail and telegraph, (3) public roads, (4) rivers and lakes, (5) canals, (6) railroads; III. Taxation, Duties, and Imposts—(1) nature of taxation, (2) true rules for taxation, (3) limits of taxation, (4) the tariff; IV. Intercommunication by the Press—(1) the press, (2) its demoralization, (3) daily national newspaper; V. Police, Passports, Registration; VI. Domestic Relations—(1) marriage, (2) children.